

REPORT

OF THE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OF

THE TOWN OF LEXINGTON.

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FOR THE YEAR 1858-59.

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BOSTON:

PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON AND SON,  
22, SCHOOL STREET.  
1859.



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YOUR Committee will briefly give their impressions of the condition of the schools through the year.

The BOWDITCH (NORTH) SCHOOL was taught through the Summer Term by Miss FRANCES M. PARKER, who had become favorably known to the district as a teacher the preceding year. She maintained her reputation well, and brought the Summer Term to an end satisfactorily both to the district and the Committee. The portion of the term following the Summer Vacation was but five weeks in length; leaving two months of the most favorable season unimproved. Such a loss of school privileges would be avoided, if the policy of employing only female teachers were adopted.

The school, as for several years past, was under the care of Mr. TIDD during the winter. There would be no need that the Committee should comment on the labors of one so long known and approved as a teacher, even if his position as a member of the Committee did not prevent.

The WARREN (WEST) SCHOOL was taught in the summer by Miss ELIZABETH S. PARKER. It was Miss Parker's first experience in teaching; and she acquitted herself in a creditable manner. The order of the school was good; and the instruction, generally, thorough. During the winter, the school was taught by Mr. J. R. DENNETT, who was also a



beginner in the profession. Mr. Dennett is a person of very quiet demeanor and retiring disposition; and the school under his charge displayed less precision and promptitude in the recitations than a year ago. But the Committee were satisfied with the progress of the pupils in their studies, and much pleased with the evident happiness and good feeling of the school under a discipline at once gentle and firm.

The FRANKLIN (SOUTH) SCHOOL has enjoyed throughout the year a high order of instruction. The teacher during the Summer Term—Miss M. A. JOSLIN, of Leominster—is possessed in an unusual degree of the qualities which secure success in a teacher,—quickness, decision, and an energetic manner. The school rapidly improved, during the summer, in all respects. It has been taught through the winter by Miss MARY A. SMITH, a teacher of long experience and good qualifications. She has given general satisfaction; has attracted the warm affection of her pupils, and secured a good degree of improvement in study. The deportment of the school is not yet so good as is desirable.

The HOWARD (NORTH-EAST) SCHOOL has been throughout the year in charge of Miss ZELINDA D. JOHNSON; and has made rapid improvement, especially during the last term. A part of the first term was virtually lost by the pupils, except as they were preparing for future progress in learning the somewhat peculiar methods of the teacher. Once accustomed to these, they made good progress; and, at the closing examination, very satisfactory results were shown. This school is very small in numbers. At the last examination, there were only seventeen pupils present. Such an inequality as is thus shown seems to indicate the propriety of some change by which the numbers of the different schools may be made more nearly equal.

Of the ADAMS SCHOOL (East Village), the Committee could repeat almost verbally what they said last year. The Pri-

mary Department, under Miss NASH, has been in unexceptionable condition throughout the year; and the exercises at both examinations were in all points excellent and interesting.

The Grammar Department, under the charge of Mr. OLIVER P. RODGERS, has manifested the same traits as previously. While a very fair, and, we judge, improved state of discipline has been maintained, it has been by the use of stringent means, and without the hearty cheerfulness and acquiescence on the part of the pupils, which is so very desirable. As to scholarship, the examination at the close of the year was very satisfactory, especially in grammar. In this respect, the school suffers but little by comparison with any school in town. We are of opinion, that it requires but the helpful and considerate sympathy of the parents both with pupils and the teacher to put this school upon a footing with the best. The Committee feel great pleasure in view of the anticipated removal of the Adams School into a new house, and hope that a corresponding improvement will be seen in the spirit that animates the school.

The HANCOCK (CENTRE) SCHOOL has completed a prosperous year under the charge of Misses DUDLEY and RUSSELL. The latter has displayed in the Primary Department a union of gentleness, firmness, and earnest effort, which has produced the natural result in an improving condition of her school. It does not, however, yet come up to the standard desired for it; and we hope to see it still improving.

Of the Grammar Department, under Miss Dudley, we can speak in the warmest terms. In point of progress, of discipline, of thoroughness, and of animated interest in the duties of the school, we think few schools equal this; and we desire to award to Miss Dudley full praise for the unremitting industry and resolute energy with which she has labored. Miss Dudley, early in the term, signified her intention of leaving at the end of the year; and, several days before the close of the term, communicated to the Prudential and



Superintending Committees, in writing, her positive resignation of the place she occupied.

It would be most pleasant to finish here our remarks on Miss Dudley's course as teacher; but it appears to us proper to add a brief statement respecting one point in which we disapprove of her course. It is due to the Prudential Committee of this district, and to a member of our own Board, to state, that neither these gentlemen, nor either of them, made any objection to Miss Dudley's leaving her school to attend the funeral of one of her connections. The prevalence of the report to that effect, so injurious to the character of these gentlemen for courtesy, and growing out of the teacher's remarks to her school, is a striking illustration of the danger and impropriety of a teacher's commenting in reproachful terms on the course pursued by her Committee, in words addressed to her scholars, and avowedly intended to be repeated by them at their homes. By some influence unknown to us, Miss Dudley had become possessed by a very strong bias of mind against a member of the Superintending Committee; and, in connection with the remarks already alluded to, she gave a full, emphatic, and deliberate expression of her opinion, in no reserved terms, and requested her pupils to repeat what she had said to their parents. In conversation with the Committee, she avowed the act, and maintained its fitness; and declared, that it was done after careful reflection, and that she considered it her right to do so. She has not intimated to us any change in her views of it. We do Miss Dudley the justice to believe that she did what she thought right. We think it wrong; a manifest abuse of her position and influence as teacher; and a proceeding, which, if it could be conceived as becoming common, would turn our schools into fountains of scandal and contention. We can only suppose, that with an overwrought sensibility, and under some malign influence, her mind had become so warped as to impair the usual soundness of her judgment; and that, after rest and quiet reflection, she will perceive that she acted hastily,

and under a misapprehension of the requirements of duty and propriety.

The Committee had not received from Miss Dudley any intimation of her suffering either real or imagined grievance, or that she had any ground of dissatisfaction. They first learned her state of mind by hearing the report of her address to her school. They could, of course, do nothing to prevent a thing already done. The near approach of the end of the term, and the fact before stated, that the teacher had already signified her intention to leave at that time, appeared to the Committee to render any official action unnecessary. That the matter has been made the subject of public discussion, is due to the publicity of the act itself. The utmost charge against the Committee is that they have done nothing; and even this statement might have been omitted but for the persistent agitation of the subject, and the misapprehension into which some have been led as to the course and position of the Committee.

The HIGH SCHOOL, under the charge of Mr. EMORY W. LANE, has achieved a successful and honorable year's work. The circumstances attending the commencement of the year were calculated either to depress or to stimulate the school and the teacher, according to the spirit with which they entered on their work. We can congratulate the town on the decision of this doubt in the happiest manner. Mr. Lane entered the school with a devoted and conscientious purpose to do his utmost for its improvement; and he was cordially seconded by his pupils. His efforts were not confined to instruction: they included discipline, even to the minutest trifles — if such things are trifles — of neatness, punctuality, and order in the schoolroom, and in the entries and ante-rooms; in all that pertained to the use of the building and the duties of the school.

The school has increased in numbers during the year, until it reached the highest point attained in its early days, — numbering forty-two members. Considering the distance



at which the pupils live from the schoolroom, — averaging about a mile, — the regularity and punctuality of attendance have been remarkable. During the last term of sixteen weeks, twenty-seven of the pupils were not once tardy, and the whole number of tardinesses was only twenty-eight. At their visits and at the examinations, the Committee have observed a very satisfactory thoroughness in the recitations, and a state of discipline good, yet not so as to preclude hope of a still better. We believe that the school has well accomplished its true aim as to the mental progress and general culture of the pupils. It is no diminution of the satisfaction we feel, in view of the results of the year, that these have been attained at an expense very considerably within the amount appropriated to the school.

At the beginning of the last term, Greenleaf's National and Common School Arithmetics were replaced by Eaton's; one book thus taking the place of two. This is an advantage, aside from the superiority of the new book in many important points. We have also endeavored gradually to substitute Colburn's Intellectual Arithmetic for Greenleaf's. In regard to the first change, such arrangements were made with the publishers for supplying the book, at first, for a reduced price, that the introduction of the new book was an actual pecuniary gain to the pupils, taken as a whole: though, in some instances, it may have caused expense; not, however, in any case, exceeding thirty-five cents. It is somewhat difficult to understand the extreme sensitiveness of many people to the cost of a new school-book. A father would hardly rebuff a child who should desire a new book to read for entertainment, and refer him to the thumbed and worn-out volume already conned many times through. Yet when the School Committee, as in duty bound, make a change which they believe will contribute to the interest or efficiency of the schools, it is treated by some as almost a robbery, even though the whole expense is but a fraction of a dollar in any case; while many simply buy one book, instead of buying another, at no additional expense.

By a recently enacted law, it is made the duty of the Committee to furnish books to the schools at cost; and, in case of the introduction of a new book, at the expense of the town. The wisdom of the law is to be proved by actual experiment.

Another law of greater importance devolves on the Superintending Committee the entire duty of hiring teachers. This change avoids some obvious embarrassments which were incident to the former arrangement. It increases the responsibility as well as the labors of the Committee. It will be their interest and duty to pay due deference to the opinions and feelings of the inhabitants of the districts; yet they cannot thus put off the responsibility that will rest on them, — to employ and retain the teachers that are, in their opinion, best qualified to secure the essential aims of the schools. The Committee will need, and earnestly hope to receive, the generous and forbearing judgment and friendly co-operation of the people in laboring for the best interests of the schools. Not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the schools, they deprecate any attempt to draw these concerns into the field of local politics; the disposition to cherish into factitious magnitude the unfortunate incidents that may occur, to impede, rather than aid, the Committee in their work, and to impute to wilful fault the errors which are incidental to our fallible nature. There is no lack of interest in the schools on the part of the people: it is unfortunate that this interest sometimes runs into channels which promote prejudice, division, and unwholesome excitement, rather than the healthy and quiet progress of the schools. Every instance in which a hasty or unjust odium against a teacher, or others specially concerned with the schools, is communicated from parents to the pupils, contributes to undermine the proper regard for rightful authority, on which alone a healthy subordination can be based.

On a general review of the year, we see much to be pleased with, little to censure; and we look forward with



cheerful expectations to the time to come, in the hope of harmony, efficiency, and happiness in our schools.

TABULAR VIEW.

NAMES OF SCHOOLS.	TEACHERS.	No. of Weeks in		Total number of	No. of Scholars		Average.	No. of Scholars		Average.	Wages in Sum-		Wages in Win-
		Summer.	Winter.		No. in Summer.	No. in Winter.		No. in Summer.	No. in Winter.		mer.	ter.	
HANCOCK GRAMMAR.	Martha A. Dudley .	26	14	40	50	43+	54	46+	\$36.00	\$48.00			
" PRIMARY .	Sabra A. Russell . .	26	14	40	71	48+	62	43+	22.00	26.00			
ADAMS GRAMMAR . .	Oliver P. Rogers . .	25	15	40	42	32+	47	41	46.88	50.00			
" PRIMARY . .	Ellen L. Nash. . . .	24	15	39	47	43	44	39+	24.00	24.00			
BOWDITCH (Summer)	Frances M. Parker .	17	..	30.8	36	29	..	..	24.00	..	..	..	
" (Winter)	Charles Tidd . . . .	..	13.8	..	..	..	36	30+	..	40.00	..	..	
WARREN (Summer)	Elizabeth S. Parker .	20	..	35	31	27	..	..	22.00	..	..	..	
" (Winter)	John R. Dennett . .	..	15	..	..	..	29	20	..	35.00	..	..	
FRANKLIN (Summer)	Martha A. Joslin . .	24	..	39	31	24	..	..	20.00	..	..	..	
" (Winter)	Mary A. Smith . . .	..	15	..	..	..	28	23	..	24.00	..	..	
HOWARD . . . . .	Zelinda D. Johnson .	20	13	33	23	16	25	20	24.00	28.00			
HIGH SCHOOL . . . .	Emory W. Lane . . .	26	16	42	33	30	42	39+	66.66	66.66			

The number of persons in town on May 1, 1858, between the ages of 5 and 15 years, was 387.

The sum raised by the town for the support of schools for 1858-9 was \$3,700, to be apportioned as follows; viz.: \$1,000 for the support of the High School; \$1,600 to be divided equally between the Adams and Hancock Schools;

and the remaining \$1,100 to be divided equally between the Howard, Bowditch, Warren, and Franklin Schools.

From the last Report of the Secretary of the State Board of Education, we find, that, in the comparative amount of money appropriated by the different towns in the *State* for the education of each child in town between the ages of 5 and 15 years, Lexington was the sixth in 1856-7, and the ninth in 1857-8. As compared with the different towns in *Middlesex County*, in 1856-7 it was the second, and in 1857-8 it was the fourth, in liberality.

According to the percentage of its taxable property, it was, in 1856-7, the fifty-sixth, and in 1857-8 the fifty-fourth, town in the *State*, in point of liberality; and, during the same years, the fifteenth town in the *County*.

But, which is less to our credit, Lexington is the hundred and ninety-second town in the *State*, classed according to the average attendance of its children upon our public schools for 1857-8!

L. J. LIVERMORE,  
CHARLES TIDD, } *Committee.*  
HOWLAND HOLMES,